

KENNEDY NOLAN

Patrick Kennedy & Rachel Nolan



Rachel Nolan and Patrick Kennedy were photographed by Sean Fennessy at the Kennedy Nolan office in Melbourne.



“LANDSCAPE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO US AND WE DESIGN TO THE PERIMETER OF THE BLOCK.”



This page, from top Copper cladding and French terracotta roof tiles at Deepdene. The exterior of award-winning Deepdene.

Opposite page, from top right The pool at Fairfield House is in a bush setting. English-style brick Arts and Crafts house in Kew, Victoria. The pool at St Kilda West house.

We are very interested in exploring how buildings age, how they make you feel and how we can intensify the engagement of memory,” says Patrick Kennedy of Melbourne architecture practice Kennedy Nolan. And this notion of creating a memorable experience is echoed by his business partner of 18 years, Rachel Nolan. “It is often about contrasts,” she says. “For example, if you move through a very low, dark space into a high and bright one you tend to remember it.” Ditto the journey through a house where everything isn’t revealed at once but rather unfurls in layers as shifting perspectives deliver the unexpected. “Our solution is never a box grafted onto an existing building,” says Nolan.

While older buildings retain an embedded memory, such as a brick ‘English-style’ Arts and Crafts house in Kew which featured in *Belle* in October 2015, Kennedy points out, “We never want to go into battle against an existing building despite, in this case, it being ordinary and quite an ugly example of its genre. Instead we elevated all the good qualities and made it better by adding invention, proportion and a touch of folly.” What is clear is the way in which the internal reorganisation serves to engage directly with the garden, and the use of trades such as skilled carpenters, bricklayers and stone specialists who have delivered an expressive and evocative outcome.

Setting up their practice in 1999, with nothing but a fax machine and a shared PC, they held a common view of architecture born out of growing up in Albury Wodonga on the Victorian border, where a certain 1970s regional vernacular was at play. Their counter-culture stance, which embraced the then unfashionable, has stood them in good stead as they have learnt to clearly articulate their case and the world has come around to their way of thinking. “Landscape has always been important to us and we design to the perimeter of the block as well as placing equal emphasis on interiors. These weren’t important considerations for architects back then,” says Nolan.

As a practice, their use of outdoor, green and garden space is distinctive. “It has taken us a long time to persuade clients to move away from the traditional back and front garden and to see the benefits of threading a number of garden spaces through a site to capture light, for air flow, and to make outdoor space work harder and be more, not less, accessible,” says Nolan.

Not all their projects are alterations and additions although their award-winning project Deepdene – 2016 National Architecture Award: Residential Architecture – Houses (New), 2016 Harold Desbrowe-Anneer Award for Residential Architecture (New) – did start that way. This family house with its requirement for six bedrooms, two living spaces, a study and a swimming pool demanded a great deal of rigour in the planning. “We do lots of work we don’t enter for awards because it doesn’t contribute to the profession in terms of solutions. This was an intense project, with huge constraints, designed to elevate the type, and contribute to the streetscape while being robust enough to take the heavy daily use of a family of seven,” says Kennedy.

Into all this function they have injected abstracted planes of ornament such as the porous pool wall – glazed blue on the pool side and painted white on the other – and used enduring materials which will gain character with the passage of time, such as copper cladding and French terracotta shingles on the roof. “There was so much quiet innovation in this house, so much honing until we believed that we had got it right, we were pleased that the profession recognised the balance of functionality and imagination,” says Nolan. kennedynolan.com.au



BELMONT HOUSE
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA



This page As the house is in a highly scrutinised conservation area of Melbourne the street facade remained unchanged with the new extension fitting discreetly on the block.

Opposite page The interiors were a key consideration from the outset, with the inclusion of future classics such as these 'Redondo' lounge chairs by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso. Artwork by Patti Bergin.





THE BRIEF FOR BELMONT HOUSE was not an unfamiliar one to the team of architects at Kennedy Nolan: sufficient room to comfortably house a large family over time, while accommodating the changing requirements of privacy, independence and space.

Featuring a beautiful, traditional facade from the street, the restored home leaves the depth and complexity of the interiors as a surprise. Any restoration of a century-old home has inherent challenges, such as aspect, orientation, relationship to the garden, council zoning, privacy and comfort. In the highly scrutinised heritage zone of the City of Boroondara, it was important that additions or changes to the Victorian house were subservient and recessive from the street view.

Kennedy Nolan designed the house to amplify its sense of place, so that the shared experiences of the family could gather depth and texture over time. The floorplan is a reflection of family life, with opportunities for both separation and togetherness. The client wished for the home to be naturally lit and ventilated, and the solution was to create a series of modulated spaces over different levels. The kids' rooms face the garden, their mezzanine configuration – both playful and flexible – allowing for interchangeable study and sleeping zones. A giant sliding door separates the kitchen and dining room from the living area, an example of how the spaces are designed to be flexible and revealed slowly as you move through the home.

Aesthetically the design is purposeful, aspiring to become a permanent background to the family's collective memory. Materials that age in place, and extensive use of texture, both in built form and furnishings, provide warmth and memorable vignettes of light and shadow. Lighting was a key consideration; the home features a range of sun-filled and cosy places with nuances that avoid overly bright, evenly lit space. The interiors were built with objects and furniture collected over the family's history, and complemented with heirlooms-to-be, including the midnight blue quilted armchairs by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso, the 'Picman' dining chairs by Tom Fereday for Desso and the 'Atticus' dining table from Lowe Furniture.

The everyday luxury found in Belmont House comes from a commitment to comfort and to a continued family history.



This page There is a great deal of clarity in both the choice and use of materials, with a sense that they will endure well and take on a patina which will become part of the narrative of the home over time.

Opposite page The client's brief included increased natural light and ventilation, which is facilitated through an open floorplan with easy connection between spaces.



THE SPACES
ARE DESIGNED
TO BE FLEXIBLE
AND REVEALED
SLOWLY AS YOU
MOVE THROUGH
THE HOME.



This page There was a conscious attempt to create 'uneven' light to establish mood and atmosphere through contrasts.

Opposite page A wall of timber shelving, custom designed to house the client's book collection, is accessed by a ladder, creating a link between modernity and tradition.